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RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY 0743
RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST PRIORITY 0527
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 1525
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0313
RUEHLJ/AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA PRIORITY 0480
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE PRIORITY 0532
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA PRIORITY 1781

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/11/2013
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KMPI](#) [FR](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH RESPONSE TO MESSAGE ON CONDEMNING THE
ARREST AND ARRAIGNMENT OF SYRIAN DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS

REF: A. (A) PARIS POINTS FOR JANUARY 29

[1](#)B. (B) STATE 11025

[1](#)C. (C) PARIS 216

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4. (b), (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) The GOF, per ref A, responded rapidly to the January 28 arrest of Riad Seif and other activists with a public statement the next day condemning the action and calling on Syria to respect its commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As previously reported, and noted in the statement, the French continue to take the lead in Damascus among EU missions requesting permission for Seif to leave Syria to seek much needed medical treatment in France.

[1](#)2. (C) French MFA DAS-equivalent for the Levant Ludovic Pouille told us February 8 that France had lobbied heavily within the EU for the Slovenian presidency to issue a similar public statement. As for travel to/from Syria, he denied that any senior French visitors were en route to Damascus or any Syrian ones en route to France (apart from a recent visit by a French National Assembly deputy). Trying to keep other Europeans from sending senior-level officials to Damascus was another matter. Despite strenuous French objections, Pouille claimed the Slovenians planned to include Syria in its EU presidency tour of the Middle East. He also complained about the Czech attitude over visitors to Damascus. Pouille also understood that the Germans would similarly continue to exchange visitors despite French objections over the visit last month of Syrian FM Mu'allim to Germany. (Comment: As reported ref c, French Elysee NEA adviser noted the futility of the EU imposing travel restrictions on Syrian officials given the absence of EU unanimity on the need or desirability of doing so. End comment)

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